

George Washington to John A. Washington, July 4, 1778, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.

***To JOHN AUGUSTINE WASHINGTON**

Brunswick in New Jersey, July 4, 1778.

Dear Brother: Your Letter of the 20th. Ult. came to my hands last Night; before this will have reached you, the Acct. of the Battle of Monmouth probably will get to Virginia; which, from an unfortunate, and bad beginning, turned out a glorious and happy day.

The Enemy evacuated Philadelphia on the 18th. Instt.; at ten oclock that day I got intelligence of it, and by two oclock, or soon after, had Six Brigades on their March for the Jerseys, and followed with the whole Army next Morning. On the 21st. we compleated our passage over the Delaware at Coryells ferry (abt. 33 Miles above Philadelphia) distant from Valley forge near 40 Miles. From this Ferry we moved down towards the Enemy, and on the 27th. got within Six Miles of them.

General Lee having the command of the Van of the Army, consisting of fully 5000 chosen Men, was ordered to begin the Attack next Morning so soon as the enemy began their March, to be supported by me. But, strange to tell! when he came up with the enemy, a retreat commenced; whether by his order, or from other causes, is now the subject of inquiry, and consequently improper to be descanted on, as he is in arrest, and a Court Martial sitting for tryal of him. A Retreat however was the fact, be the causes as they may; and the disorder arising from it would have proved fatal to the Army had not that bountiful Providence which has never failed us in the hour of distress, enabled me to form

Library of Congress

a Regiment or two (of those that were retreating) in the face of the Enemy, and under their fire, by which means a stand was made long enough (the place through which the enemy were pursuing being narrow) to form the Troops that were advancing, upon an advantageous piece of Ground in the rear; hence our affairs took a favourable turn, and from being pursued, we drove the Enemy back, over the ground they had followed us, recovered the field of Battle, and possessed ourselves of their dead. but, as they retreated behind a Morass very difficult to pass, and had both Flanks secured with thick Woods, it was found impracticable with our Men fainting with fatigue, heat, and want of Water, to do any thing more that Night. In the Morning we expected to renew the Action, when behold the enemy had stole of as Silent as the Grave in the Night after having sent away their wounded. Getting a Nights March of us, and having but ten Miles to a strong post, it was judged inexpedient to follow them any further, but move towards the North River least they should have any design upon our posts there.

We buried 245 of their dead on the field of Action; they buried several themselves, and many have been since found in the Woods, where, during the action they had drawn them to, and hid them. We have taken five Officers and upwards of One hundred Prisoners, but the amount of their wounded we have not learnt with any certainty; according to the common proportion of four or five to one, there should be at least a thousand or 1200. Without exaggerating, their trip through the Jerseys in killed, Wounded, Prisoners, and deserters, has cost them at least 2000 Men and of their best Troops. We had 60 Men killed, 132 Wounded, and abt. 130 Missing, some of whom I suppose may yet come in. Among our Slain Officers is Majr. Dickenson, and Captn. Fauntleroy, two very valuable ones.

I observe what you say concerning voluntary enlistments, or rather your Scheme for raising 2000 Volunteers; and candidly own to you I have no opinion of it; these measures only tend to burthen the public with a number of Officers without adding one jot to your strength, but greatly to confusion, and disorder. If the several States would but fall upon some vigorous measures to fill up their respective Regiments nothing more need be asked

Library of Congress

of them, but while these are neglected, or in other words ineffectually and feebly attended to, and these succedaniums tried, you never can have an Army to be depended upon.

The Enemy's whole force Marched through the Jerseys (that were able) except the Regiment of Anspach, which, it is said, they were affraid to trust, and therefore sent them round to New York by Water, along with the Commissioners; I do not learn that they have received much of a reinforcement as yet; nor do I think they have much prospect of any, worth Speaking of, as I believe they Stand very critically with respect to France.

As the Post waits I shall only add my love to my Sister and the family, and Strong assurances of being with the Sincerest regard and Love, Yr. most Affectt. Brother.

Mr. Ballendines Letter shall be sent to New York by the first Flag. I am now moving on towards the No. River.